

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

March 1999

FEMA acts to strengthen the NFIP

Working with organizations such as the National Emergency Management Association, FEMA is attempting to strengthen the National Flood Insurance Program. The NFIP offers government-backed flood insurance to property owners in communities that meet the program's standards, which are designed to encourage mitigation efforts by local government, businesses and homeowners.

"The federal government took this on because private insurers would not insure against flooding back in the 1960s," said Mary Camp, VDES Hazard Mitigation branch chief. The Army Corps of Engineers was initially tasked with the ambitious project of mapping floodplains in the mid-to-late 1960s so that preliminary standards could be established.

Camp explained that most communities in Virginia were mapped from about the mid-1960s through the 1970s. These Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) estimate Base Flood Elevations for a 100-year flood. Local ordinances must be based upon these standards in order to

qualify for coverage under the NFIP.

"At this point, Virginia has a very good record — almost all of our communities at risk from flooding are participating in the program," said Camp. "For a community in good standing, anybody can buy flood insurance. You don't have to be in the floodplain to buy insurance."

Up until 1997, the NFIP policy covered repairs after the event, but not the extra cost to bring structures up to local ordinances reflecting the program's standards. In July of 1997, "Increased Cost of Compliance" coverage, designed to encourage preventative mitigation, was added to the policy. This raised premiums but allowed homeowners to apply an additional \$15,000 coverage toward improving the safety of their homes.

The fact that policyholder premium payments fund the program, rather than tax dollars, saves taxpayers an estimated \$800 million annually, according to FEMA Director James Lee Witt. Regarding FEMA's recent NFIP initiatives, Camp talked about some aspects of the

program the agency is working to improve. Currently, there is no limit to rebuilding. Even if the cost of repeatedly rebuilding exceeds the value of the structure, the homeowner pays the same premium.

Second, unlike other types of insurance — such as auto insurance — the premium is built on risk, not tied into actual damage and the number of claims made. Last year, FEMA collected feedback from state and local officials regarding these issues and is using this data to help determine needed changes.

Camp offered some observations. "As part of their Hazards Analysis, local emergency managers need to be familiar with the locations of floodplains and the people and businesses who are at risk," she said. "It's also helpful to be aware of the meaning of the terms "substantial damage" and "repetitive loss," as they are applied under the NFIP. And, as changes are enacted in the program, stay versed in the standards your community needs to meet to stay in good standing."

For information on the NFIP, contact the state NFIP coordinator at 804/371-6135 or visit FEMA's Web site at www.fema.gov/nfip

Tornado Preparedness Day

March is upon us and soon, so will Tornado Preparedness Day. This event, scheduled for March 23, gives you the perfect opportunity to work with the schools in your locality. Encourage everyone to participate. From school administrators to faculty and students, this is your chance to help educate your schools regarding disaster preparedness.

If you have any questions, call Janet Clements at 804/897-6510.

The latest update

The *Update* Managing Editor, Jo Hoots, has accepted a position with the Virginia Community Policing Institute in Richmond. Please be patient as we transition to a new managing editor for the newsletter.

Thanks to all who contributed with information, interviews and articles over the last few years. Your input helped guarantee a quality product.

Inside

- ☐ **How resilient are disaster victims? - p. 2**
- ☐ **Procedures developed for motor vehicle fluid discharges - p. 3**
- ☐ **Participate in Y2K survey - p. 3**
- ☐ **Virginia Beach Fire Department series on EENET - p. 4**

Resilience characterizes disaster survivors

by *Lennis G. Echterling, Ph.D.*
James Madison University

"People think that time heals, but I don't think I'll ever get over it. I would like to put it behind me, but I can't ... We are still finding mud lodged in the cracks in the walls and in the joints of the furniture. We still have mud stains in the pots, pans, and in the Tupperware. We've scrubbed and cleaned but the stains will not come out ...

A couple of years ago, we found that some of the air ducts still had mud caked in them ... Even our birth certificates and the family documents have mud stains on them." (Memory of survivor seven years after the Floods of '85)

The vivid image of the dried mud, packed so hard and so deep into the cracks and crevices that it virtually became part of the house, is a striking metaphor for the disaster survivor. To the casual observer, the repaired house may look as good as new. But the flood has left its mark, and the mark is a permanent one. One only needs to look long enough and hard enough to see it.

Since the mid-1970s, mental health professionals have continued to learn more about the immediate and short-term reactions to a disaster, but only recently have begun to address the long-term effects. Another recent development is that disaster interveners and researchers have started to recognize the impact of the disaster on the relief workers and other natural helpers, in addition to the direct victims.

The first lesson learned from the survivors is that many people have emotional wounds that are long-standing, but hidden. Being a victim of a natural disaster is not a single point in time; it is an ongoing condition that goes on months and even years after the disaster. As a result, disasters involve both post-traumatic and chronic stress.

While the direct victims of a disaster suffer many painful consequences, they are not the only ones who are wounded. Friends, relatives and other members of the community also experience survivor guilt, anxiety, fatigue, and other symptoms of post-traumatic and chronic stress. In particular, disaster workers and other members of the helping network, such as the clergy, are high risks for

psychological wounds.

Many victims of disasters develop into survivors without the assistance of formal counseling. Moreover, when survivors do seek out the emotional help they need, they usually turn to their relatives, neighbors, friends, or clergy, who form a community's natural helping network that promotes the recovery process.

In other words, just as there have been wounds hidden to mental health professionals, there also has been hidden healing. Disaster researchers have found that survivors who look for some positive meaning in the traumatic event were able to cope better.

Implications for Disaster Intervention

Recovery from disaster is more complicated than either a simple tragedy or inspirational story. Disaster counseling is facilitating that recovery process of a victim struggling to become a survivor. However, traditional counseling approaches have been not only inefficient, but counterproductive, in dealing with the widespread and long-standing wounds of disaster.

Using a variety of strategies, such as offering outreach services to direct victims and others, developing follow-up programs, organizing support-group activities, and providing consultation and education, is essential in disaster counseling.

Outreach Services

First, since the victims do not come to interveners, the interveners have to go to them. An aggressive program offering immediate outreach services to the survivors is an essential beginning of disaster intervention. Instead of passively waiting in their offices, disaster interveners make their services easily available and accessible by going to the disaster sites, emergency shelters, and disaster assistance centers.

The goal of outreach services is to facilitate the process of recovery by helping survivors handle the post-traumatic and chronic stress in healthy, positive ways.

Consultation Services

In addition to reaching out to help the direct victims, it is essential to work with the formal and informal helping resources in the community. Consequently, another important strategy of disaster interveners is consulting with the area's emergency services, volunteer disaster workers, schools, churches, and community agencies.

The consultation takes two forms: supportive services and training. Providing supportive services focuses on the consultees' personal needs. For example, since rescue and relief workers commonly experience stress reactions, disaster interveners now routinely offer Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. CISD gives workers an opportunity to ventilate, support one another, and learn stress management skills. It is likely that many other formal and informal helpers would benefit from such supportive consultation services.

The second form of consultation is training, equipping helpers with the knowledge they need to help survivors handle the stresses of a disaster. The training involves describing the typical reactions to disasters and providing opportunities to practice disaster intervention techniques. Since the distinction between helpers and victims becomes blurred after a disaster, any training should also address how helpers can monitor and manage their own stress.

Follow-up Services

Unfortunately, disaster counseling programs often have been limited to providing intensive, short-term, and immediate help. Although such an approach is vital, it is only the first step. Survivors facing the chronic stresses of a disaster also require ongoing information, support and counseling.

Follow-up services for survivors should take a variety of forms, including face-to-face contact, telephone calls, letters, brochures, and newsletters. The brochures and newsletters can offer helpful information and suggestions on dealing with the consequences of the disaster.

Based on what we learned about the psychological effects of disaster, we encourage communities to promote disaster preparedness among the general population, advocate the emotional support of victims and responders, offer consultation and education on coping with disaster stress and offer outreach crisis intervention services, such as debriefings.

To read the full text of this article, visit the Virginia Disaster Stress Intervention Web site at: <http://cep.jmu.edu/vadisaster/hidden.htm>. For more information, call Dr. Lennis Echterling at 540/568-6522, e-mail echterlg@jmu.edu

HAZ MAT

Committee deals with motor vehicle fluids discharge

by Perry C. Cogburn
VDOT Transportation Emergency Operations Center

Whenver there is a major hazardous materials incident on one of Virginia's highways, numerous response organizations send representatives to assist the Incident Commander in defusing the emergency situation. Some of those responding state agencies, such as VDES, DEQ, Virginia State Police and VDOT, are assigned certain tasks by the State Emergency Operations Plan, Volume IV, Oil and Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan. Since the tasks are known and all the agencies send representatives, the emergency situation is often mitigated rather smoothly and to the Incident Commander's satisfaction.

However, in the routine accident that occurs on Virginia's highways, the cleanup of the motor fuels is often left to either the local jurisdiction or VDOT. Because most highway accidents result in "small" spills, many of the state agencies named earlier do not send responders. The tasks assigned by the Oil and Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan then have to be handled by the on-scene agencies. When the local jurisdiction is faced with the economic reality of who is going to pay the bill, the easiest and quickest way is to leave it up to the property owner. Since VDOT is considered the owner of most of the roads in Virginia, the cost of these cleanups often falls back on this agency.

In order to establish some guidelines for dealing with these small spills, a committee headed by VDES was called together. It includes representatives from DEQ, the state police, DMV, Virginia Maintenance Services, Inc., (a VDOT highway maintenance company) and VDOT. The committee has been working on a document titled, "Guidelines for the Mitigation of Accidental Discharges of Motor Vehicle Fluids (Non-Cargo)."

The purpose of the document is "to provide practical guidelines for the mitigation of accidental discharges of motor fuels in any quantity, whether from a vehicle accident or other unintentional act (fuel tank overfill, etc.). Motor vehicle fluids include gasoline, diesel fuel, hydraulic fluid, motor oil, and antifreeze coolant solutions." The document was envisioned as a quick-reference guide for the first people on scene. It includes a discussion on the mitigation process, recovery of the motor vehicle fluids, cleanup, equipment resupply, cleanup enforcement authority, and code references.

For a copy of the new guideline or for more information, please call Steve De Lisi at 804/897-6572, e-mail sdelisi.des@state.va.us, or e-mail Perry Cogburn at cogburn_pc@vdot.state.va.us

Local participation needed in Y2K survey

To help both Virginia Power and VDES with emergency planning issues, VDES is mailing a "Y2K Preparedness Survey" to all of the local emergency services coordinators in the Commonwealth. The survey is designed to help determine the readiness level of local public safety agencies in relation to the VDES Year 2000 Contingency Planning Process and Virginia Power's Nuclear Emergency Preparedness.

The questions will help determine Y2K compliance of EOC computer systems, computer systems that interface with state and federal systems, public notification systems and other equipment containing embedded chips;

local resources available in the event of power outages and other critical system failures; the existence of plans related to Y2K problems and other relevant questions.

Your participation is vital. With the information you supply, both VDES and Virginia Power can better plan to meet any possible contingencies. The surveys, which were mailed at the end of February, should be reaching most localities through the first week in March. The deadline for submitting the information is March 31.

If you have not received your survey, or if you have questions, please call your regional coordinator. Thanks for your participation.

FEMA offers Y2K planning manual

If you're seeking a model plan to guide your Y2K efforts, take a look at FEMA's *Contingency and Consequence Management Planning for the Year 2000 Conversion*, which offers a range of information to assist emergency managers.

Having recently added a Y2K Operations Supplement to the Federal Response Plan, FEMA suggests the material contained in its guidebook can supplement the EOPs of state and local government. The publication provides

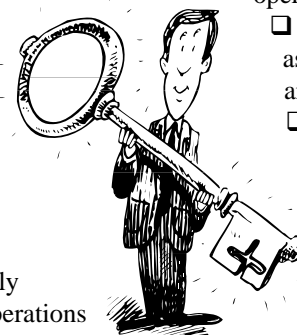
information on:

- ☐ identifying potential problems and risk assessment;
- ☐ keeping the emergency management organization operational;
- ☐ informing and assisting the public; and
- ☐ developing and implementing Y2K consequence management plans.

The guide was developed with the help of NEMA

and IAEM, which provided extensive assistance in its creation.

To download PDF documents of this manual, visit <http://www.fema.gov/y2k/ccmp.htm>.



Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Leadership and Influence

March 9-11
James City County

Developing Volunteer Resources

March 24-25
Harrisonburg

Disaster-Related Needs of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

March 30
Roanoke

Rapid Assessment Planning

Workshop
March 31-April 1
Culpeper

Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness

April 13-15
Abingdon

Media Relations Workshop

April 16
Manassas

Disaster Response and Recovery Operations

April 20-22
Roanoke

EOC Management and Operations

April 27-29
Leesburg

Leadership and Influence

May 4-6
Charlottesville

Coordinator's Briefing

May 12-13
Abingdon

Effective Communication

May 18-20
Harrisonburg

Mass Fatality Incident Management

May 25-27
Richmond
For information, call the VDES Training Office at 804/897-6557

Reservist Training

State Emergency Response Team Exercise

March 23
Richmond

Information and Planning Branch Workshop

April 21
Richmond

Public Assistance Program Orientation

April 22
Roanoke
For information, call Lin Saylor at 804/897-6552

Technological Hazards

SHMERAC Training Committee Meeting

March 9
Richmond

Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

March 8-19
Virginia Beach

HAZMAT Team Leaders

Meeting
March 30-April 1
Roanoke

Hazardous Materials Technician

April 5-16
Ashland

Statewide Incident Management Committee: Third Biennial Workshop

August 15-18
Williamsburg
For information, call Ron Hargrave at 804/897-6573

Search and Rescue

Managing Search Operations

Part I: March 20-21
Part II: April 16-18
Charlottesville

SAR Council

April 24
Richmond

Basic Air Scent Dog Team Workshop

May 22-23
Location to be announced
For information, call Winnie Pennington at 804/674-2422

Conferences

Virginia Emergency Management Conference

March 17-19
Williamsburg
For information, call 757/491-2800

National Hurricane Conference

March 29 - April 2
Orlando
For information, call 850/906-9224



Classroom Connection: "Communication Skills and Conflict Resolution"

March 3
2:00-3:00 p.m.

Unified Command: EOC Focus

March 10
2:00-4:00 p.m.

National Alert Broadcast

March 17
2:00-3:30 p.m.

Disaster Resistant Homes

March 24
2:00-4:00 p.m.

Virginia Beach Fire Department Hazardous Materials Series

March 31
2:00-3:00 p.m.

For information about program content or for satellite coordinates, visit the EENET Web site at www.fema.gov/emi/eenet.htm, e-mail: sue.downin@fema.gov, or call 800/527-4893, 301/447-1068. Some of these programs can be viewed live on the Internet.



10501 Trade Court
Richmond, VA 23236-3713

UPDATE is a monthly publication of the Virginia Department of Emergency Services. For permission to reprint articles in your publication or on the Internet, please call 804/897-6510.

State Coordinator...Michael Cline
Information Director...Michael J. La Civita
Executive Editor...Janet L. Clements
Managing Editor...Jo A. Hoots

Access the VDES homepage at:
<http://www.vdes.state.va.us>